

«GreetingLine»

The national response to Hurricane Katrina presents new challenges for program administration, data collection, and evaluation within the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program (CCP).

We are fortunate to have recently received approval from the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for a new standard set of data collection instruments and procedures that will be used for grantees across the country. A sample of the new standard data collection instruments is enclosed and will be distributed to all States electronically.

As part of an ongoing interagency collaboration, SAMHSA's Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) is working with the National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (NCPTSD) within the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to help coordinate national cross-site evaluation efforts focusing on grants to States involved in the crisis counseling response to Hurricane Katrina.

As lead evaluator, Dr. Fran H. Norris and her team will assist each of you to execute a common strategy of data collection and analysis. She will also consult with any evaluation staff identified by each grantee regarding evaluation procedures. Many of you may already know Dr. Norris and her colleagues, but allow me to introduce her briefly. Dr. Norris is a research professor in the Department of Psychiatry at Dartmouth Medical School, where she is affiliated with the NCPTSD and the new Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Response to Terrorism (START), which is a multi-institutional center of excellence in the social and behavioral sciences funded by the Department of Homeland Security.

Dr. Norris has worked in the disaster field for 20 years, having been the principal investigator of a number of studies funded by the National Institute of Mental Health that examined the psychosocial consequences of major hurricanes and floods (including Hurricanes Hugo, Andrew, and Pauline). Her 2002 review, "60,000 Disaster Victims Speak," is one of the best-known works in the field of disaster mental health.

SAMHSA has collaborated during the last 5 years with Dr. Norris and her colleagues at NCPTSD on several projects that have advanced understanding of exemplary practices in disaster mental health. Recently, she directed a retrospective evaluation of our program that involved archival record reviews, a directors' survey, and case studies of responses to several exceptionally challenging events. Dr. Norris understands our program and its goals and we are fortunate to have her directing this very challenging national evaluation.

We will set up a conference call soon to discuss first steps in initiating this collaborative project. Before that call, you will receive an evaluation manual about the toolkit and its implementation.

Sincerely,

Seth Hassett, M.S.W.  
Chief  
Emergency Mental Health and Traumatic Stress  
Services Branch

Enclosures

cc: Matthew J. Friedman, M.D., Ph.D.  
Alan I. Green, M.D.